



Newsletter no 9



Final Project Conference

On March 21st the NewWBL project lead partner Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Slovenia (CCIS) hosted the final project conference “New Models in Work-based Learning” in GZS headquarters in Ljubljana.



The conference was organised to present the final project outcomes to representatives of the target groups and stakeholders. 97 participants attended the conference.

Conference key note speakers represented CCIS, Slovenian National Institute for Vocational Education and Training (CPI), project partners from Latvia - National Centre for Education (NCE) and Employers Confederation (LEC), the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training Bundesinstitut für Berufsbildung (BIBB) from Germany.

Sonja Šmuc, Director General of CCIS told the WBL pilot project in Slovenia received over 600 offers from the companies. That allowed young people to learn how to get to their profession faster and at the same time get a sense of how to work in the company. She also advocated necessity of improving WBL reputation in the country and mentioned Germany, Austria and Switzerland as an example where apprenticeships are highly valued.



She emphasized that Slovenia is a strong industrial country. Export is mainly based on goods, not so much on services. She also added that it is important to maintain and strengthen what the country has and direct it to higher added value. Technical skills of VET graduates are not as good as needed and it is the duty of the whole system to improve them. Young people should be provided with appropriate education and choices.

Director of CPI **Elido Bandelj** talked about the need for closer cooperation between the education (practical training) and the economy at all stages of planning, adopting educational acts and their implementation. He said that apprenticeship is one of the forms of learning in the workplace and young people should be trained both for entering the labor market and for continuing their education and carrier.



Andreja Sever from CCIS discussed the main challenges Slovenian vocational education system is currently facing: lack of adequate VET response to the labor market needs; necessity for improving awareness and attractiveness of WBL/apprenticeship, need for quality assurance mechanisms in WBL.

Darko Mali, CPI, presented the model of the pilot project evaluation in Slovenia. He pointed out the importance of all stakeholders' involvement in WBL implementation.



The plenary part of the conference was concluded by guests from partner countries. **Inta Baranovska** from NCE and **Ruta Porniece** from LEC, Latvia introduced participants with their country's experience in WBL which is a high level VET priority. They focused on several national and Baltic initiatives in support of WBL implementation.



Marthe Geiben (BIBB) spoke about sectoral approaches to studying cost-benefits of apprenticeship in Germany. She presented the main data from the last survey carried out by BIBB. In Germany despite of financial obligations companies are motivated to provide training because investing in training pays off in a long term.

After the plenary session participants could join one of the three workshops:

Workshop 1 *Vocational Education and Training – Individualisation*, moderated by Finnish partners from WinNova, Liisa Sarasoja, Ville Rajala, Johanna Hankimaa-Khezami. In this workshop participants were introduced to the new Finnish approach in VET – individualization.



Working in three groups participants tried to analyse the proposed Finnish model from a student's, teacher's and employer's perspective. The identified advantages included: flexible way to studies (school, WBL, e-platforms), shortened length of studies, lower drop-out rates; socialisation in working environments, more practical training, better cooperation with working life, possibility to follow students positive progress and support the carrier plan; Life - long learning opportunities, way to find new employees, new carrier pathways for in-company trainers, new ideas and innovations from young students. As challenges were mentioned: lack of financing for tutoring the students, over-load risk of in-company tutors, unequal treatment of apprentices and employees in SME's; time and resources for individual guidance of students, documentation of students' progress, training of teachers to use individualization, etc. Tandem training of VET tutors from schools and VET tutors from companies was offered as a solution to some of the challenges identified.

Workshop 2: *Collaboration and support among learning environments for practical work-related training* led by Dr. Marthe Geiben from BIBB, Germany and Darko Mali, CPI, Slovenia.



The participants of the second workshop were mainly representatives from VET schools. In the first part, Dr Marthe Geiben responded to questions about the cost benefit of apprenticeships in Germany. Participants were also interested in problems related to matching apprentices and companies and what happens if the apprentice is not staying in the enterprise after the training time.

In the second part, Darko Mali focused on the principles of cooperation between schools and companies. Occupations and occupational areas are different, so it is important that various specific and tailor-made modes of cooperation are developed and they are suitable for a particular branch. Important challenge is also to connect young people wishes and professional traditions that have been developed in Slovenia, and how to reconcile the professional interests of young people and connect them with the needs of the economy. After short theoretical introduction participants continued working in groups and discussing areas that should be strengthened and further developed. The group work concluded with following suggestions:

- To match VET school and company expectations regarding WBL it is important to organize regular study visits when in-company mentors visits schools and school teachers visit companies;
- Cooperation between WLB coordinators from schools and in-company mentors should be improved;
- There should be financial and professional support for companies and this should be coordinated by chambers of commerce;
- More focus should be on individual learning approach considering students' needs.

Workshop 3 *"The future of practical work-related training"* was led by Andreja Sever, CCIS, Slovenia.



Workshop participants mainly represented Vocational Secondary schools and colleges, including schools already involved in pilot apprenticeship in Slovenia. The workshop was also attended by representatives from the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; Ministry of Economic Development and Technology; the Public Scholarship, Development, Disability and Maintenance Fund of the Republic of Slovenia, the Employment Service of Slovenia.

At the beginning, Andreja Sever dealt with the three main areas based on common and specific recommendations identified within the NewWBL project:

- How to provide a better response to the needs of the labour market?
- Is there room in Slovenia for a new form of vocational education / individual contract, collective agreement, apprenticeship?
- Quality assurance.

Within these areas, the following issues were highlighted as the most important:

- The characteristics of today's young generations (especially from the aspect of responsibility, proactivity, development of manual skills, working habits) - permissive education;
- Appropriate placement of career guidance and empowerment of counsellors and other professional staff in elementary schools;
- Timely decision-making on the deployment of education programs (at the latest in September for the next school year) and adequate information of all stakeholders by the Ministry of Education, Science and Sport;
- The promotion of professions (in particular in relation to point 3), so that secondary schools are left to themselves in this field;
- The role of parents and caregivers in the vocational guidance of children and the importance of developing the skills of running their own careers (already elementary school pupils);
- The importance of national partnership and local partnerships in the field of WBL and apprenticeship (based on national and local development strategies, action plans, etc.) and ensuring adequate school response to the needs of the local labour market;
- The advantages of apprenticeship in the field of vocational education and training in Slovenia - students who complete the apprenticeship agreement are seriously determined to be well trained in the profession, which is also reflected in school success;
- To effectively inform girls for professions in which they are under-represented;
- Ensuring a higher quality of apprenticeship with independent apprenticeships (instead of combined); - it was difficult to perform combined departments and a warning to examine the current funding of schools;
- Establish a system of longer-term forecasting of staffing needs and competences so that schools can respond in time to the needs of employers.

The participants supported the main recommendations that were developed in the framework of the international partnership in the project, namely:

- It is necessary to develop national and regional/local partnerships in the area of WBL/ apprenticeship, which plan, monitor and take care of the vision of this field in Slovenia;
- Key stakeholders should be identified to carry out support activities in this area, clearly define their roles;
- It is necessary to provide sustainable funding sources;
- It is necessary to take care of the professional development of professional staff in schools and mentors in companies.



On the 22nd of March project partners met for the final project meeting. During the meeting partners evaluated the document developed by the Project “Policy Recommendations for the Integration of Work-based Learning and Apprenticeship in the VET Systems” against the 20 guiding principles for high-performance apprenticeships and work-based learning - the criteria proposed by the Commission for the European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships. The conclusion was that The Policy recommendation document is in line with the Commission’s proposed guiding principles.

Please visit the CCIS website to get acquainted with the final conference video and presentations:

<https://www.gzs.si/vajenistvo/vsebina/AKTUALNO/ArticleId/64668/vkljucevanje-vajenistva-in-practicnega-usposabljanja-z-delom-v-sisteme-poklicnega-izobrazevanja-in-usposabljanja>

The conference video is also available on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8GWfKRnjcvw&feature=youtu.be>

Visit NewWBL project website at: <http://newwbl.eu/>

